

Spaced Out & Cut Up

A collection of Horror
& Science Fiction stories

by
Tony Sandy

DragonEye Publishing

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& Science Fiction stories
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a world, populated by creatures not ruled by man, that consider him food for thought (or a local delicacy, in the crossover horror/ science fiction story that starts the next section). From this point on it is all downhill, even if sometimes in an amusing way (but not if you're the one being eaten of course).

These stories end up on a more happy note, in the realm of the future, where robots rule and new worlds have been conquered by man, so it's not all bad, unless you've seen Alien, Predator, The Thing, Invasion of The Body Snatchers....

These are mostly quick reads for commuters on their way to or from the biggest horror of all – work or if adventurous, a journey to elsewhere / else when in the universe. Wherever they take you, they cannot be *ignored* even if you're being *gnawed* at the time, by some zombie on his way to work too (or blood sucker, if it's management).

Without further ado...

THE ZOMBIE DIARIES OR 'WE'RE SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS'

When I died, I never realized how much it would change my life. I don't miss the sex. I look down and think easy come, easy go. Food though, that's different. I can't taste anything, anymore but I have this indescribable yearning for warm, living flesh. Once upon a time it was fine wines, delicate flavours. What did these things taste like I will never know. I can't remember anything much about my previous existence, especially with regards to the basic senses. Everything about my life is so vague, so unreal nowadays. It's good losing all those memories. I no longer feel the pain of the past. All the emotional hurt I caused, lost in a fog of indifference. I don't feel in the other way either. I was hit by a speeding car, driven by a crazed driver, eager to get away from me. I just picked myself up, dusted myself down and walked off like nothing had happened. This road rage incident would normally have had me hospitalised. Why the panic I wondered? He could have run faster than me any day. In fact he could have walked faster as well: We can only catch others when we hunt in packs or catch them unawares (asleep, eating, in the toilet, panicking to get out of a door or a window and fumbling at the latch or handle).

Life makes no 'scents' to me anymore. I hear werewolves are the opposite. Smell is heightened but not in my case. I may stink because I'm composed of decomposing flesh but I can't tell (Even your best friends won't tell you). Rotten sense of

taste, smell, touch - can't see or hear well either. I'm rotten all round.

The only thing I can sense is warmth. I suppose that's because I'm 'dead' cold...heartless even or at least dead beat. Shuffling along city streets or country roads, all I see are my dead brothers and sisters, shuffling along just as pointlessly. Is there no hope left for Man? Are we the remnants of a despairing God? Can this be humanities fate - more of us, less of them? We hate the living for what they have because we don't have it anymore. They live and breathe in their rarity, while we suffocate in our monstrous numbers. We starve in our limitations and drown in our abundant nothingness. Empty of promise, we have no future. Our children won't follow us except into oblivion. We rot in our empty shells of yesterday as though today meant something (It doesn't). What is there to say? Nothing. What is there to do? Likewise nothing. So instead of living meaningful lives, we die in meaningless ones instead. The ground could not hold us because we bored it to death. Slow moving? Slow thinking too. We are in no rush to get anywhere, do anything. We are the ultimate in laid back. Who set the alarm that got us up, I wonder? Where are we going? nowhere. What are we doing? Nothing in particular. We are the inheritors of a dead kingdom - the land of the hippies. Oh God, am I still here, still alive in this dead body? Is there no release from this wasted, wasted life....

I'm so exhausted. I wish I could sleep but that's a luxury reserved for the living. Even vampires sleep but then they're not properly alive either are they? Oh the delicate actions I used to perform, like lifting up a fork. If I tried that now, I'd knock the table flying. I suppose that I don't sleep because I don't run off my excess energy (As I don't have any, how can I?). We're stuck in limbo as a race - always present but never really here, never really aware. I grunt and groan at every movement. I growl at the dogs that try to pull me down or run off with various body parts. Stairs? I hate stairs! Even Daleks never had the problem I have with them. You corner a human, go all the way up to the landing and they've jumped out the window by the time you've reached them. Still it's not always bad news. Sometimes we stumble all the way back down again, to find them lying outside, unconscious or staggering away with a broken leg: Oh goody, equal footing! It's a bit like fishing but we don't have any bait, although I do remember a particularly smart guy for a zombie, who went from supermarket to supermarket, for his weekly shop. Well weekly might be too short a time span to describe his hunting patterns. We are like reptiles. We don't need to eat daily - just every now and again. That grumbling in my tummy for instance is the late Reverend Jenkins. It's funny to think I dined on him last night, rather than with him as I used to do on the odd occasion.

Inner life? I don't have an inner life. My attention span has gone, so books are out of the question - besides I can't turn individual pages (as I say, delicate movement has gone). I remember some poor guy trying to imitate someone reading.

The book fell to bits in his hands. It was almost as funny as this zombie trying to have sex with another zombie (a half remembered activity from another time - like a child trying to act like an adult and failing miserably or a monkey mimicking a human). The strangest part was the zombie woman, who first of all ignored his advances, then tried to push him off as she got on with eating a passing stranger. Then a light of recognition seemed to flicker inside her as she realized what he was trying to do. She turned towards him, took his face in her hands and bit him. He soon got the message as much as if they were a live couple - not tonight darling, I'm dining out with friends.

I have to watch myself. I have this old habit of picking at my skin, when nervous. I stripped the flesh off my left arm one night (lose bit and I pulled until it reached my elbow). Won't do that again. Forgot it doesn't grow back anymore.

I feel drunk all the time. It's like I stagger all over the place, hardly able to control my movements. The worst thing is the permanent hangover aspect of it all (the stomach permanently out of sorts and the headache). I want to poke my fingers into my eyes, just to get at the source of the pain but I know it would blind me and there's nothing worse than being a blind, hungry zombie.

Talking of fine dining and alcohol, I sometimes wish I were a vampire. They at least can walk into a restaurant without anyone batting an eye - me, I'd have to shuffle round the back

and dig through the bins, for something to eat as tramps wouldn't get through the front door.

'No tie sir and no skin on your left arm. Sorry we cannot let you in like that, besides which the smell of decaying flesh would put the other diners off.' I can hear it all now.

Vampires however could drink delicate flavoured red wine and get away with it. Eating though might be a problem. Steak, rare, with blood oozing out. How could they resist the urge to pick it up and suck it dry? Us monsters always show ourselves up in refined company. I of course shouldn't be in the ranks of the decaying. With my breeding really I should be underground, only coming out at night to dine on the best necks in town. Alas it was not meant to be.

Werewolves. I always keep an eye on the moon in case it's full. I remember one band of zombies I came upon, who'd obviously thought they'd cornered a nice, juicy meal out in the open, when it turned out that it had cornered and opened them up instead (No blood but plenty of guts and limbs spread everywhere). I remember one poor fellow - his decapitated head, still blinking in disbelief at what had just happened.

It's a disgusting, pain filled life but I have no choice, except to lead it. I could kill myself and I've seen the results of, some of the recently turned - heads torn off, when they tried to hang themselves. Others still 'alive' but smashed up, when they stood in front of a train or lorry (glancing blow survivors). Standing head on was very effective as you can imagine - spectacular even. Humpty-Dumpty had a great Fall but getting

hit by a truck took the Spring out of his step, leaving him with egg all over his face. The good thing though is that it did bring him out of his shell.

When I say we have no inner life as you can see that isn't strictly true. I've seen zombies who were as daft as my dogs, before I ate them. Trying to negotiate a narrow gap, instead of turning sideways as any normal monster would do, they'd keep trying to go through, head on. Bash, bash, bash without learning a thing. I wanted to just grab their shoulders and turn them forty five degrees but I'd already found that didn't work as they'd then go in the direction they were now orientated in. They were like these toys that used to bounce off the skirting board, turn and head in a new direction ad infinitum or like mindless zombies, which of course is what they were. I suppose the fact I started off more educated and well brought up, put me at a distinct advantage over my fellow dead-heads (I'd got further to fall, more to lose).

Do we live forever? No. We cannot regenerate decaying matter, so eventually fall by the wayside - our losses more than made up for by the living, when death takes them by the hand. What I fate I often think. To die, thinking you're heading for paradise and instead to wake up back here again, still alive but in a more meagre way. We who are about to die, salute you! (or we will do when we rise again).

I can still remember my first kill. That mouthful of warm flesh was so good. I was on the outskirts of the pack - a know

nothing newbie, given the chance to join in. As I said, we cannot taste but we can sense warmth. I bit into that still screaming, still living human being. We tore her to pieces, until blood loss knocked her unconscious. A part of me wanted to scream 'No!' Another part of me wanted to vomit - revolted and ashamed at what I'd done but the hunger was too strong. It's an addiction all living things have and we are no different. We eat to survive.

One of the crowd looked at me afterwards as much as to say you did alright kid, you're now fully bloodied. I grunted in acknowledgement and turned away satisfied. In an earlier incarnation this would have come across as a smile, a raised glass or even a pat on the back. We sat down afterwards. like everyone does after a good meal. Being zombies though, we could not afford to settle for long because like the Tin Man in The Wizard of Oz, you froze as rigor mortis set in. Joints cracked as we rose and some whose time had come, never rose again (We didn't even give them a backwards glance as they sat and rotted in the clearing, their eyes being the only sign of life: For those of us who came back to life, there was the rising. For those returning to dust, there is only the settling or the crumbling).

It might be more accurate to say that inner life is all I have rather than that I have none. No intelligible sounds come out of my mouth and my interaction with the outside world is minimal. I grunt and groan at the others but that is as far as it goes. I'm introverted because I don't have the energy (or body

parts) to extrovert; no deep philosophical discussions or even idle chit-chat.

'Morning Mrs Wicks, how's your lumbago?'

'Hi Fred, where's Marge this morning?'

I would kill, even to say something as trite as this, where once I'd turn my nose up at such a waste of time and effort (Nowadays I see the world through a glass, darkly).

I have no future and a quickly disappearing past. The present is dull as ditch water and smells as stagnant. I am nothing in a sea of nothingness. It's a man's life in the army - well it's a nothing life as a zombie. The same boring nothingness, day after day, interrupted only by the occasional meal. We're like reptiles, eating now and again but resting the rest of the time. Have I said that before? Then the degeneration is complete and my mind is now going, rotting faster than my body. The circular life of the bored and boring is becoming my own. I will repeat every day as if it were every other day and my last bastion of hope, my memory, my awareness, will fade into the twilight world I inhabit; neither alive nor dead, asleep nor awake; conscious nor unconscious. A thing barely alive but annoyingly so to those who are still in charge of their faculties, still really alive: Those that can smell Spring's flowers, taste the air, eat snow flakes, touch and be touched by love; drink in every day as if it were your last and in our case wish it were...

CULTURE SHOCK

I was lost, asleep, caught in a nightmare, until Professor Andrews rescued me. His treatment was new, radical and no-one else had thought of it, let alone tried it. I was the first successful guinea pig - all the others had 'died' or remained unchanged but I was saved. The current was too strong, too weak or the condition of the others was too far gone. After the series of shocks, I started to remember who I was, who I'd been before and then I was slowly able to communicate this to others. "My name is Charles Ward," I said, stumblingly. "I used to live in Acacia Avenue, Fulham. I was married with two children, until the illness took me. My family - God no! Were my first victims (I would have cried, had it been physically possible but my condition stopped me). "It's alright old man. Steady on. It's perfectly understandable. The horrors of your previous life," said the professor.

He was the only one who treated me with kindness. The others in the establishment called me a monster and didn't trust me.

"Once one of them, always one of them," they intoned behind my back.

"You just can't trust them - I wouldn't turn my back on him for a second."

I was still a monster, a misfit to them and would revert to type, given half a chance. Maybe they were right - how could I tell? I could be fine one minute and slide back into bad habits in an instant - who knows? Even the professor can't be sure, which

is why I'm monitored so thoroughly. The cameras pan me. Eyes follow my every move. If it wasn't for the recovered memories of who I was, I might become paranoid.

My beautiful daughters! My wife! How could I do this horrible thing to them? I was a monster alright. A creature not to be trusted. I was an addict of human flesh and the professor had saved me.

They give me insulin and feed me nutrients, intravenously because they say I cannot digest food normally yet. Apparently all the dead flesh is returning to life and I am becoming 'human' again. They say the return to conscious awareness is the first stage and that they might be winning this war, if they can turn me back to normality. The professor believes that consciousness is what keeps the animal urges under control and stops me - us in fact, from being condemned to a life of mindless cannibalism, eternally. I hope he is right. He further believes (and the evidence seems to suggest it, strongly) that once you've captured the mind and got it in thrall, the body will follow. He says, like criminals and addicts, it's a question of reprogramming the being. I really hope he is right.

The guards wanted their revenge on me - not for my crimes against my own flesh and blood but for those they had lost to 'my kind.' It gave them a sense of closure and of power, to beat the hell out of me. It made little to me as I felt nothing and was broken already, in mind and spirit, and as the professor said the body just followed down the mineshaft of

terror.

I am not alone here. The others are chained and locked in cells because they have been known to gnaw off their own hands and pull off their own feet, to try to escape - such is the effect of their deep hunger. They look at me with pleading eyes - like animals that cannot communicate in any other way. I turn my back on them, glad to no longer be one of their number, sad that they are still trapped in this lifestyle and ashamed that I cannot help these lab rats.

Talking of lab rats, the urge is returning in me. It started with surreptitiously swallowed insects, then rodents, birds if I can catch them and once a hedgehog. Oh yes, as they learned to trust me, they let me out into the grounds - at first supervised, then quite freely. By this time Andrews had moved on. I was no longer his favourite 'pet,' just an old project that he let others monitor. I was still fenced in. I still had cameras aimed at me but by this time I was considered mostly harmless. The smell of rotting flesh that was me, had subsided with time and the effects of various treatments. On top of that people had become acclimatised to my odour. I was the grenade that hadn't gone off.

Now, like a prisoner of war, I searched for a weak point - the spot where the searchlights or cameras missed and I dug.

I had known I was starting to revert when the Parkinson's like symptoms started to reappear and I found it hard to kick start my body into normal, human motion. I hid the shuffling gait